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Sense-making, Agency, and Globalization: Local Representations of Development

Encounters in Nicaragua

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Master of Arts

in Linguistics

by

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December 2015

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ABSTRACT

Sense-making, Agency, and Globalization: Local Representations of Development

Encounters in Nicaragua

by

Jessica Love-Nichols

In recent years language and globalization has emerged as an important topic of study in linguistics and linguistic anthropology (Blommaert 2010, Coupland 2011, Fairclough 2006). Scholars have considered the macro-level effects of globalization through the lenses of language and materiality (Heller 2010) and political economy (Shankar and Cavanaugh 2012), as well as the function of individual agency within larger structures of globalization (Alim et al. 2008, Canagarajah 2013). Building on such work, the current paper examines Nicaraguan community members' agentive participation within the structural constraints of globalizing encounters. Data are drawn from everyday interactions and interviews recorded in the course of ethnographic research on NGO-community relationships in central Nicaragua. I analyze locals' discursive representation of development encounters as either moments of agentive acceptance of, or resistance to, globalizing processes. Drawing on a linguistic-anthropological approach to agency (Ahearn 2001, Duranti 2004), I examine the use of linguistic resources such as tense shifts, generic pronouns, and stance-taking to construct the NGO-community relationship as one that either affects the norms and practices of the inhabitants, therefore facilitating greater connectivity between the local and international communities, or one that provides solely material benefits, therefore limiting such connectivity and restricting development encounters to the transfer of material goods. Ultimately, I argue that while structural forces create globalizing

interactions and constrain the frames within which community members can represent development encounters, individuals agentively participate in or resist globalization through interpreting their own roles in the interactions as well as the role of NGOs in the community.

Introduction

Siempre han venido estas organizaciones ...

The organizations have always come...

nos ha beneficiado.

they've given us aid.

- Gladis

Todos los organismos que han venido de otros países,

All the organizations that have come from other countries,

nos han orientado ...

they've given us training...

- María

In recent years language and globalization has emerged as an important topic of study in linguistics and linguistic anthropology (Blommaert 2010; Coupland 2011; Fairclough 2007). Scholars have considered the macro-level effects of globalization through the lenses of language and materiality and political economy (Heller 2010; Shankar and Cavanaugh 2012). Though some scholars have considered the function of individual agency within larger structures of globalization (Alim et al. 2008; Canagarajah 2013; Sutton 2007), much of the work on language and globalization has focused on the macro-level institutional processes, representing local community members as passive subjects being drawn into a global village. Proponents of grounded globalization (Burawoy et al. 2000; Bucholtz and Skapoulli 2010), however, argue that the processes of globalization are made up of many interactions, taking place not on an abstract macro-level, but rather on a grounded, local scale, and have therefore called for the ethnographic study of globalizing encounters, contending that it is necessary to study the processes of globalization locally and ethnographically. Bucholtz and Skapoulli suggest that interactional and sociolinguistic analyses can be productive lenses through which to investigate global and transnational dynamics, as language “mediates both local and translocal social experience” (2010:2).

At the same time, amidst widespread conversations about the failures of international development, many international development organizations have turned to a new type of

practice, called “Community Driven Development” or “Participatory Local Development” (Chambers 2007; Olukoton 2008), in which community members are conceived of as leaders in the planning, implementation, and monitoring processes of development projects (Mansuria and Rao 2004). Governmental and non-governmental organizations often use tools such as community surveys, community mapping, seasonal calendars, and planning matrices to increase community participation and agency, but preliminary analyses of projects carried out through such frameworks have shown a wide variety of outcomes (Mansuri and Rao 2004). Furthermore, organizations rarely examine the ways in which community members negotiate their own agency and participation, and hence they are unable to evaluate the level to which they succeed at facilitating truly community-led projects.

Development encounters thus provide an excellent opportunity to study local agency within grounded sites of globalization, as they epitomize many of the characteristics of globalization. They are sites of linguistic and ideological contact in which the participants have asymmetrical access to resources, and thus provide an illustration of the complexity of agency as well as its mobilization at a local level. In such encounters, community members’ agency may be constrained on many levels. On the material level, they may either be unable to participate (due to employment or other commitments), or unable to refuse to participate (because the financial benefits of participation may be necessary for their family).

Participants’ agency may also be constrained on an ideological level with regard to how they represent these encounters, as they may be reluctant to position the role of an NGO negatively when speaking to a development worker or because they do not want to risk alienating future NGOs.

Despite these structural factors, in community members' discursive representations of development encounters it is clear that they are not simply passive subjects of globalization, lacking in agency and being overwhelmed by international forces, but rather agentive participants in globalizing interactions. Among other strategies, such as participating in or abstaining from development projects, or taking stances that place them in convergent or divergent alignment with the NGOs, community members participate in globalizing development encounters by choosing how to make sense of the NGO-community relationship. Participants' creative and complex strategies for the mobilization of agency within structural constraints complicates scholarly understanding of community members' agency within development encounters and forces us to rethink a purely top-down understanding of globalization.

In this thesis I examine locals' agentive participation in globalizing encounters through their interpretation and representation, or what I approach as *sense-making*, of NGO-community relationships. The analysis highlights sense-making as an agentive act in which community members discursively construct their interpretation of globalizing interactions, in this case as either a *beneficio* (material aid) or *orientación* (training). Some community members represent NGOs' contributions as improving the norms and practices of local residents, thereby facilitating greater connectivity between the local and international communities and promoting community participation in the "global village". Others depict NGOs as providing solely material benefits, limiting such connectivity and restricting development encounters to the transfer of material goods, working to maintain their community's independence from the global flow of ideas and practices. Ultimately, I argue that while structural forces create globalizing interactions and constrain the frames within

which community members can discursively represent development encounters, individuals agentively participate in or resist globalization by negotiating their own roles in these interactions as well as the role of NGOs in their communities.

Agency and Sense-making in Globalization

Work in the interdisciplinary study of globalization has generally focused on three main areas—the economic, cultural, and political effects of globalizing processes—although some scholars have also considered environmental globalization to be a central concern for the field (Mol 203). In this thesis I take globalization to be the social and global processes that create increased global interconnectedness through flows of culture, information, technologies, people, commodities, practices, and ideologies (Appadurai 1996; Gunewardena and Kingsolver 2007; Inda and Rosaldo 2002; Naples and Desai 2002; Lewellen 2002; Robinson 2008). I also draw on the concept of “connectivity” (Tomlinson 2007), in which greater globalization leads to closer connections between the practices and ideologies of geographically distant people. The inhabitants of the village that is the focus of my study come into contact with various global flows in many ways, including through their contact with international NGOs. Each development encounter, then, also becomes an opportunity for globalization.

The majority of work on globalization focuses on global-scale processes and tends to suggest that globalization is something imposed on small communities by forces beyond their control. A few scholars, however, recognize communities as important actors in the processes of globalization. Robinson, for instance, writing about rural communities in Central America from a critical globalization perspective, says, “As ruralities integrate in new ways into the global system they give new meaning to the classical term ‘global village,’

now less the idea of a world shrunk by global communications than small settlements in rural districts that are full participants in the globalization process” (2008:222). Following Robinson, in this thesis I argue that globalization research should attend more to the agency of communities and community members, as whether they are participating in or resisting globalization processes, they are agentic participants in a globalizing world.

Because most research on globalization has focused on the macro-level processes at play, there is an urgent need for ethnographic research in globalization studies (Gunewardena and Kingsolver 2007). Among scholars taking an ethnographic perspective, researchers have investigated women’s movements in India (Pandey 2007), women’s embodied experiences of neoliberal globalization in Argentina (Sutton 2007), and the emergence of NGO elites in Nicaragua (Mattson 2007). I attempt to add to the growing body of research on globalization that focuses on the interactional level and subjective experience of marginalized communities, helping to alleviate the erasure of people and their experiences that can occur when research focuses solely on the global to the exclusion of the local.

Since language mediates NGO-community interactions and acts as a primary way in which participants interpret development encounters, it becomes a productive lens through which scholars can examine the experiences of local communities participating in globalizing processes. Work on language in the context of globalization has mostly focused on the effects of greater global interconnectedness on language, such as language contact and the resulting endangerment of local languages (Collins, Slembrouck, and Baynham 2009; Mufwene 2002), how a globalized world imbues some linguistic varieties with capital while others remain undervalued (Heller 2010) and breaks down the discrete boundaries of languages (Blommaert 2010), or how global capitalism leads to an integration of language

and materiality (Shankar and Cavanaugh 2012). Others have analyzed the role of language in the broader effects of globalization, examining its function in creating and maintaining transnational communities of practice (Alim et al. 2008; Pennycook 2006), stratifying and categorizing speakers and communities (Heller 2010), creating hierarchies of language ideologies (Billings 2009), and affecting local sociocultural constructs (Besnier 2007). Another major area of study in language and globalization is the study of global Englishes and global languages more generally (Alim et al. 2008; Canagarajah 2007; Pennycook 2006). Most of the globalization research in sociocultural linguistics, however, focuses primarily on languages as objects of study, not considering the relationship of discourses or discursive practices to globalizing processes and phenomena.

Among the scholars of globalization who consider discourses and discursive practices, most focus on the spread of discourses and ideologies across borders, such as the discourse of beauty (Machin and van Leeuwen 2003), discourses of bilingualism (Heller 1999), and discourses of tourism (Thurlow and Jaworski 2011). In the field of critical discourse analysis some scholars have studied the role of large-scale discourses in the process of globalization, such as the construction of discourses of underdevelopment and international development (del Faille 2011; Escobar 1984) and the globalizing nature of discourses of globalization (Fairclough 2007).

Many of these approaches to globalization, however, have been criticized for taking an overly top-down view of the phenomena under study, generally overlooking the micro-level of globalization in everyday interaction, and not taking into account individuals' agentive participation in the process. Blommaert, a major theorist of the sociolinguistics of globalization, developed the framework of "scale" (2010), which allows for attention to the

micro-interactional level. His work, however, like much of the work in globalization, ultimately focuses on the macro-level effects of intercultural and interlingual contact. Canagarajah, critiquing this tendency, argues that the local is getting “shortchanged by the social processes and intellectual discourses of contemporary globalization” (2005:xiv) and calls for a refocusing on the local sites and effects of globalization. Similarly, Bucholtz and Skapoulli point out:

Such work frequently emphasizes macroprocesses and leaves largely unexamined the microlevel of what social actors actually do with the scapes that shape their worlds. Although transnational and global cultural identifications unquestionably carry a certain ideological force, it is in local spaces and communities that identities are tried out, embodied, and adapted in order to be made coherent. (2010: 2)

An exclusive focus on macro-level processes involved in globalization not only leaves unscrutinized the question of how cultural globalization takes place on a local level, but it also perpetuates the erasure of the people and experiences that actually constitute globalization. Sociocultural linguists are well-equipped to examine globalizing processes at the micro-interactional level, as language mediates the everyday interactions through which globalization is realized. I endeavor to build on work in sociocultural linguistics to contribute to the understanding of such micro-level processes of globalization by focusing on local subjective experiences of globalizing encounters and particularly the way in which community members make sense of these interactions.

I argue that discursive practices of sense-making are agentive forms of participation in globalization. Linguistic-anthropological theories of agency demonstrate the important role of discourse in agentive action (Ahearn 2000, 2001, 2010; Duranti 2004). Indeed, the very act of using language is an act of agency (Duranti 2004). Ahearn defines agency as the “socioculturally mediated capacity to act” (2001:112) and highlights the bidirectional

relationship between language and agency – that is, language users both reflect and reproduce agency through their discourse. Importantly, agency does not have to be seen as an intentional or individual phenomenon. As Bucholtz and Hall (2005) point out, agency can be distributed across a community or mobilized through perceptions and representations of other people, ideologies, and social structures.

Duranti provides an expanded definition of agency, saying that it is “the property of those entities (i) that have some degree of control over their own behavior, (ii) whose actions in the world affect other entities’ (and sometimes their own), and (iii) whose actions are the object of evaluation” (2004:453). While this definition focuses on a mostly embodied idea of agency that creates visible outcomes, in this thesis I illustrate the mobilization of agency on an ideological level in which locals exercise their agency through the interpretation of events. My understanding of interpretation as agentic action, however, fits Duranti’s definition of agency as it is subject to his three criteria. The agentic nature of sense-making can be seen in the interpretation of community-NGO interactions. Community members can either actively further globalization and the interdependence of their community with the wider world by interpreting contact with NGOs as something that changes their community’s practices and ideologies, or limit the effects of globalization on their everyday ideologies and practices, acting to maintain themselves as distinct from the international culture by interpreting NGOs’ impact as nothing more than a material donation.

I theorize community members’ interpretation of the NGO-community relationship is as a form of sense-making involving the creation and use of sociocultural constructs. I draw on the concept of sense-making developed by Geertz, who points out the human tendency to want to give meaning to experiences: “the drive to make sense out of experience, to give it

form and order, is evidently as real and as pressing as the more familiar biological needs” (1973:140). Scholars of globalization have mostly studied this phenomenon through the lens of *localization*, saying, “No matter what modernity is to begin with” this argument goes, “once cooked in the heat of local fires it will have lost its shape to a significant extent and become something indigenous and distinctive, a homemade product of the kind anthropologists have long studied” (Robbins 2001:901). The *localization* view of the phenomenon by which cultural flows become adapted and adopted by communities does provide an accurate description of the process on a macro level. In its erasure of meaning, however, *localization*, as a theoretical framework, obscures the everyday interactions through which sense-making takes place, as well as the agentive nature of sense-making action on a local level.

One way in which community members make sense of the NGO-community relationship is by positioning NGOs within local sociocultural constructs. Social constructionism has long recognized that widely accepted knowledge and worldviews can be products of social interaction rather than essential facts about the world (Berger and Luckman 1966; Du Bois, forthcoming), or what Searle would call “institutional facts” (2005), something that exists only because people implicitly agree that it is so. Scholars have argued that such diverse subjects such as gender, women refugees, quarks, danger, and the child viewer of television are all social constructs (Hacking 1999). Because these constructions differ from culture to culture, they are one way in which locals can make sense of, or localize, foreign contact, ideologies, and practices.

In this paper I examine development discourses as sense-making moments for the speakers (Prior 2011, Rodriguez 2002). For researchers, discourses can also be a productive

lens onto the sociocultural constructs and sense-making process used by communities, as narratives often highlight cultural discourses (Tannen 2008) and are a primary through which people “give shape to experience” (Ochs and Capps 1996:19). Throughout their discourses, community members tend to position NGOs in relation to two sociocultural constructs: as either a *beneficio* or an *orientación*, through stance-taking actions. A stance is the social act of evaluating some object, positioning oneself and others, and aligning (convergently or divergently) with others (Du Bois 2007). In these conversations, Pradeños position NGOs through stance-taking actions such as overt evaluative statements as well as implicitly positioning themselves with regard to NGOs.

Development in Nicaragua

Nicaragua is the largest country in Central America in terms of area, though its population, at just over 6 million, makes it the fourth most populous Central American nation (ahead of just Costa Rica and Panama). Nicaragua is also the second poorest country in the western hemisphere, and has a turbulent recent history, having suffered through a destructive revolution and counterrevolution during the late 1970s and 1980s as well as a crippling depression during the 1990s (Foran 2005). The economy is still mostly agricultural, with many rural Nicaraguans depending on agricultural wage labor as their primary source of income. Because of the economic situation, Nicaragua received the most Official Development Assistance of any country in the Americas from 2000 to 2008, receiving \$741 million dollars in international aid in 2008 alone (World Bank 2015). Since 2008, rates of international aid have declined somewhat due to international economic factors as well as the changing political and foreign relations (BCN 2010), but Nicaragua still receives considerable amounts of international aid each year.

The Nicaraguan context provides an excellent opportunity to analyze discourses of development encounters, as organizations focused on international development are a substantial presence in most Nicaraguan communities. As Mattson writes, “the grand majority of the population gets affected by or becomes involved in the organizations; by listening to a radio program on sexual rights or democratization, by having a Peace Corps volunteer living in the house, or a daughter or uncle who works for an NGO, or as participant or beneficiary of a project” (2007:23-24). The current and past prevalence of international organizations in Nicaragua allows community members to draw on a wealth of experience in development encounters as they make sense of such interactions as moments of globalization, creating the possibility of complex and varying representations of different NGOs or different encounters with the same organization.

In the past 50 years the appearance of NGOs in Nicaragua has changed drastically. Before the revolution of the late 1970s, organizations were either controlled by the Somoza government or operated covertly (Walker 2003). After the success of the revolution led by the FSLN (*Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional*), the Sandinista government organized revolutionary groups into popular organizations, which, though funded by the state (Baumeister 1995, Polakoff and La Ramée 1997, Barraclough and Transnational Institute 1988, Tvedt 1998), depended on mass volunteerism to conduct campaigns such as a national *alfabetización* (literacy instruction) (Serra 1991). These mass organizations boasted the membership of nearly half a million adults (in a country with a population of slightly over three million) as late as 1989 (Serra 1991). After the election of the National Opposition Union (*Unión Nacional Opositora*) in 1990, the Nicaraguan government instituted Neoliberal reforms which put pressure on the popular organizations, unions, and cooperatives that had

historically represented the poor (Borchgrevink 2006, Polakoff and La Ramée 1997). By 2008, participation in unions and cooperatives had decreased substantially (union membership was down to 8% from 22% in 1989 (Chahim and Prakash 2014), and the number of cooperatives shrank from 3800 in 1990 to 400 in 1999 (Nítlápan-Envío 1999). The decrease in participation in these traditional grass-roots organizations corresponded with an “explosion of modern NGOs” (Chahim and Prakash 2014:493).

Chahim and Prakash create a distinction between “modern NGOs”, which are funded externally and directed by professional staff, and “traditional grass-roots organizations”, which are led and funded by members, and require the voluntary participation of many non-professionals. According to these definitions, there were a few NGOs operating in Nicaragua before 1990 (Smith 1990), but the number has grown greatly since then. Chahim and Prakash refer to this change as the NGOization (*ONGización*) of civil society. These NGOs receive funding from many of the same foreign sources that used to transmit their aid through government sources, and employ many former government employees (Mattson 2007). Some estimates place the growth of NGOs at around 300 in 1990 to 2000 in 2005 (Borchgrevink 2006, Mattson 2007, Vázquez 2008). Foreign funding has similarly grown from around 90.2 million US dollars in 2000 to \$289.3 million in 2006 (BCN 2007), even though overall foreign aid to Nicaragua is decreasing (BCN 2010), reflecting donor preferences to give to private sector organizations in Nicaragua (Walker 2003) and more generally (BCN 2010).

NGOs in Nicaragua tend to be structured with community leaders, committees, and community educators (*promotores*) at the lowest level. These participants are nominally volunteers, though Mattson (2007) notes that they often receive small stipends or other perks from their status. Above the *promotores* there is a level of professional Nicaraguan staff, and

the highest level consists of advocacy networks, which Chahim and Prakash describe as “umbrella associations of civil society organizations” (2014:494).

The town of El Prado is in the municipality of Ciudad Dario in the central Nicaraguan department of Matagalpa. It is located in what was historically a tropical dry forest, though widespread deforestation has caused a great deal of erosion, soil degradation, and local climatic changes. The town has about 1,000 people living in about 120 houses. Located seventy kilometers north of Managua, the eastern edge of El Prado borders the Pan-American Highway, making Managua and the department capital of Matagalpa fairly accessible to community members. Many Pradeños work near Managua in clothing factories or meat processing plants. The majority, however, are subsistence farmers who cultivate corn, beans, squash, tomatoes, and onions. Families typically have chickens, pigs, dogs, cats, and occasionally turkeys, horses, or cows.

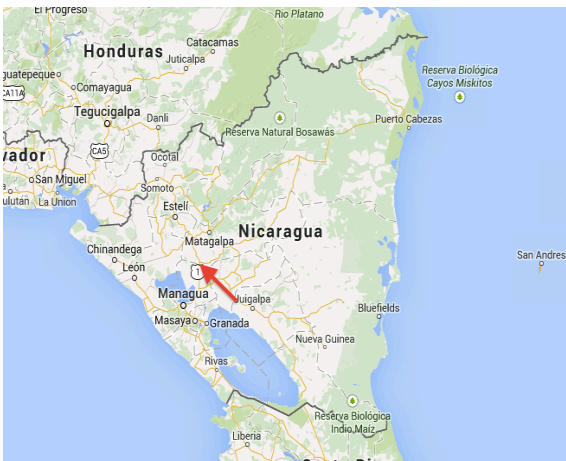


Figure 1.

The location of El Prado in the central northwestern region of Nicaragua (marked by the arrow).



Figure 2.

One of El Prado's three main roads.

Hurricane Mitch greatly affected Matagalpa in 1998, causing severe flooding and extreme loss of life and property. El Prado, for instance, is bordered on one side by a river and on the other by a lake, both of which overspilled their usual boundaries, submerging many of the houses in the town and destroying the bridge linking El Prado to the

municipality head Ciudad Darío. Since this disaster El Prado has been the focus of a great deal of international NGO activity, with some longstanding relationships that last years, and other shorter term involvements with organizations that carry out a project and then move on.



Figure 3.
The author and Doña Alina during the construction of her improved stove (2011)

As a Peace Corps volunteer, I was assigned to this community in 2010 as an Environmental Educator. In this position I worked with three schools in the area teaching science, facilitating the planting of school gardens and tree nurseries, organizing recycling campaigns, and painting environmental murals with students. Outside of the schools I got to know community members by forming a women's soccer league, constructing *estufas mejoradas* ('improved stoves', which reduced wood consumption and improved indoor air quality by channeling the smoke through a chimney), and participating in community events.

In August of 2014, fourteen months after completing my Peace Corps service and returning to the United States, I went back to visit El Prado and collect data. During four weeks of ethnographic fieldwork, I collected about 13 hours of video recordings of community meetings, interviews, development encounters, and everyday interactions. Drawing on the relationship I developed as a Peace Corps Volunteer, I asked community members to allow me to observe, record, and interview them. Though I originally thought I

was investigating the community's relationship with the environment, over the course of four weeks one of the most prominent topics of conversation for community members was their experiences working with international NGOs. Discourses of community-NGO interactions, for instance, kept emerging as relevant during recorded spontaneous interactions, and I therefore also began to also ask interviewees about "the history of the town working with NGOs" ("*la historia que tiene esta comunidad trabajando con las ONGs*"). In this thesis, then, I focus on discourses that Pradeños told me about their experiences working with NGOs. I transcribed the relevant interviews and interactions to a high level of detail according to the Discourse Transcription 2 (DT2) system (Du Bois et al. 1993).

The analysis draws on both a close discourse analysis approach and a dialogic syntax framework (Du Bois 2007, 2014) to provide a closer analysis of the constitution of the sociocultural constructs '*orientación*' and '*beneficio*'. A close discourse analysis of the interactions allows an examination of the discourse content as well as the linguistic forms, context and characteristics of the interaction. Dialogic Syntax provides a framework through which the engagement and links between different utterances and discourses can be fully considered. Such links allow us to examine how participants engage the ideas and identities of others by drawing on aspects of their utterances and creating resonances between previous utterances and their own. Participants use this resonance to implicate evaluations or positions in relation to stance objects, ideas, or other participants. In this paper, I use diagraphs to showcase the resonance between utterances and illustrate how participants indexically link their statements to other concepts, discourses, and community-level constructs, thereby constituting and replicating the sociocultural constructs. Diagraphs are defined by Du Bois as "higher-order, supra-sentential syntactic structure that emerges from the structural coupling

of two or more utterances (or utterance portions) through the mapping of a structured array of resonance relations between them” (2014: 10). This paper diverges slightly from a canonical dialogic syntax framework in some cases in that I examine resonances across utterances occurring dialogically, but also across different speech events (Agha 2005, Fairclough 1992, Silverstein 2005). While such utterances are not intertextual in the sense that participants are not knowingly employing the words of another, their resonance through similar grammatical and sociocultural constructions both reflects and affords community members’ ideological use of agency.

Grammatical Agency in Discourses of Development Encounters

Much of the work on agency in linguistic anthropology has focused on the grammatical expression of agency across different languages and cultures (Duranti 1990, 1994; Rumsey 1989). In their discourses of development encounters, community members in El Prado differ with respect to the amount of grammatical agency they express. Some community members use semantic case roles, person-marking (such as the variation between first person and generic third person indirect objects), and subject-marking to encode their agency in the development encounters. Other locals, however, express little or no linguistically-encoded agency in their discourses. This can lead to the impression that community members are passive subjects in such globalizing interactions. Crucially, however, although they may not position themselves as central to a development project or represent their agency by assigning themselves agentive case-roles or placing themselves in the subject position, participants’ interpretation of their experiences is, in and of itself, an agentive social act and form of agentive participation in globalization.

Grammatically encoded agency

The following example illustrates a participant who positions herself as central to the development project, representing herself agentively through both grammatical resources and interpretive resources.



Figure 4.
Doña Gladis participating in an ethnographic interview
with the author (2014)

In this conversation Gladis reflects on her participation in different development projects. Gladis is an active community member, though because she has a job outside of the community, she spends less time in the community and is unable to participate as fully as she used to. She began reflecting on her participation in response to my request that she tell me a little bit about herself, how long she had lived in the community, etc. As a follow-up question to her recollections of helping in the community and forming groups with other women to carry out projects, I asked her to tell me a little bit about the El Prado's history working with NGOs.

Example 1.

- | | | | |
|---|---------|-----------------------------|--|
| 1 | GLADIS; | A veces este, | <i>Sometimes um,</i> |
| 2 | | ayudo, | <i>I help,</i> |
| 3 | | participo en las limpiezas, | <i>I participate in the clean-ups,</i> |
| 4 | | aquí de la comunidad. | <i>here in the community,</i> |
| 5 | | Trabajamos en conjunto. | <i>We work together,</i> |
| 6 | | Nos apoyamos uno al otro, | <i>we support each other,</i> |
| 7 | | hacemos grupos, | <i>we make groups,</i> |
| 8 | JESSI; | [Mm]. | <i>Mm.</i> |
| 9 | GLADIS; | [de limpieza]. | <i>to clean.</i> |

| | | | |
|----|---------|--|--|
| 10 | JESSI; | Mhm. | <i>Mhm.</i> |
| 11 | | Y me puede contar un poquito de, | <i>And can you tell me a little about,</i> |
| 12 | | de la historia que tiene esta comunidad, | <i>the history of this community,</i> |
| 13 | | trabajando con las ONGs? | <i>working with NGOs?</i> |
| 14 | GLADIS; | Sí, | <i>Yeah,</i> |
| 15 | | este, | <i>um,</i> |
| 16 | | ... | <i>...</i> |
| 17 | | Desde que yo:? | <i>Since I?</i> |
| 18 | | He trabajado— | <i>have worked—</i> |
| 19 | | <u>He</u> trabajado en las comités. | <i><u>I have</u> worked in the committees.</i> |
| 20 | | .. | <i>..</i> |
| 21 | | He ayudado en la comunidad, | <i>I've helped the community.</i> |
| 22 | | para .. | <i>to ..</i> |
| 23 | | que se vaya desarrollando, | <i>so that it keeps developing,</i> |
| 24 | JESSI; | Mhm. | <i>Mhm.</i> |
| 25 | GLADIS; | poco a poco, | <i>little by little,</i> |

In this exchange Gladis is quite explicit about her embodied participation in past NGOs' projects and often places herself as a semantic agent. She uses primarily first person pronouns, for instance, and places a great deal of prosodic stress on the first person in line 19: "He trabajado en las comités" ("I have worked in the committees"). Gladis therefore not only participated on a material level during the development encounters in question, but represents herself as a central participant, speaking quite agentively about the community's relationship with NGOs. In lines 5-6, for instance, she says "trabajamos en conjunto, nos apoyamos uno al otro" ('we work together, we support each other'), and she goes on to say in lines 49-51 that "sin ayuda de la gente, no hay nada" ('without the people's help, there is nothing'), a formulation which explicitly grants a great deal of agency and power to community members.

Other community members also represent their agency grammatically at different times. The following diagram shows examples of participants' grammatically-encoded agency, such as agent semantic case roles ("We(AGT) maintain the community(PAT) cleaner.") and first person subject-marking (through *-amos* and *-emos* suffixes).

Diagram 1. Grammatically encoded agency in development encounter discourse within and across speakers

| NAME; | L. # | | | | | |
|-----------|---------|---------|--------------------|--------|------------------|---------------|
| GLADIS; | 5 | | trabaj- | -amos | | en |
| 9/16/2014 | | | <i>work</i> | 1P.PRS | | <i>in</i> |
| GLADIS; | 6 | nos | apoy- | -amos | uno | al |
| 9/16/2014 | | 1P.REFL | <i>support</i> | 1P.PRS | <i>one</i> | <i>to</i> |
| GLADIS; | 7 | | hac- | -emos | grupos | |
| 9/16/2014 | | | <i>make</i> | 1P.PRS | <i>groups</i> | |
| KARLA; | 11 | | manten- | -emos | mas limpia | la |
| 9/14/2014 | | | <i>keep</i> | 1P.PRS | <i>cleaner</i> | <i>the</i> |
| GLADIS; | 6 | | trabaj- | -amos | todos | |
| 9/16/2014 | | | <i>work</i> | 1P.PRS | <i>all</i> | |
| GLADIS; | 12 | | particip- | -amos | en | las |
| 9/16/2014 | | | <i>participate</i> | 1P.PRS | <i>in</i> | <i>the</i> |
| MARIA; | 8 | le | d- | -amos | orientaciones | a |
| 9/12/2014 | | 3S.IO | <i>give</i> | 1P.PRS | <i>trainings</i> | <i>to</i> |
| | | | | | | <i>others</i> |

Grammatically represented agency, such as that in the above diagram, tends to be used by participants aligning ideologically with NGOs. Gladis, for example, one of the most consistent supporters of NGOs, provides a great deal of dialogic resonance across her utterances. By representing themselves as central and agentive participants in development projects, these community members further development goals and globalized ideologies, agentively participating in globalization on a local level.

In contrast, Example 2 presents a participant who positions himself as very peripheral to a particular development project, expressing little grammatical agency. Ricardo is a community leader and a participant in many of the development projects that occur in El Prado. The following narrative occurred during the same conversation as that between Carol and Elisa (seen below) and Ricardo is discussing the reforestation project carried out by the organization Zenade. He evaluates the project positively because of its material benefit to the participants, but within his narrative consistently does not grammatically represent agency for himself or the community within the context of the project.

Example 2

| | | | |
|----|----------|---|---|
| 1 | RICARDO; | Bonito pues, | <i>Good well,</i> |
| 2 | | un programa bien, | <i>a program that's very,</i> |
| 3 | | este, | <i>umm,</i> |
| 4 | | bien bonito pues, | <i>very good,</i> |
| 5 | | porque en realidad, | <i>because in reality,</i> |
| 6 | | no sólo le estaba regalando, | <i>they weren't just gifting,</i> |
| 7 | | sino, | <i>but,</i> |
| 8 | | que tambien, | <i>also,</i> |
| 9 | | pues, | <i>well,</i> |
| 10 | | le:: | <i>they:</i> |
| 11 | CAROL; | Ayudaba a la [misma xxx]. | <i>Helped the very same people xxxx.</i> |
| 12 | RICARDO; | [le facilitaba] verdad, | <i>they helped with right,</i> |
| 13 | | este, | <i>umm,</i> |
| 14 | | trabajo, | <i>work,</i> |
| 15 | | y para el bien de ellos mismo, | <i>and for the good of the same workers,</i> |
| 16 | | pues, | <i>well,</i> |
| 17 | | porque la reforestación era cada quien, | <i>because the reforestation was each person,</i> |
| 18 | | en sus [solares], | <i>on their lot,</i> |
| 19 | JESSI; | [Ah:]. | <i>Ahh.</i> |
| 20 | RICARDO; | su propiedad, | <i>their property,</i> |
| 21 | JESSI; | Uh huh. | <i>Uh huh.</i> |
| 22 | RICARDO; | no iba a reforestar áreas, | <i>The didn't go to reforest lands,</i> |
| 23 | | este, | <i>umm,</i> |
| 24 | | áreas ajenas. | <i>other peoples' lands.</i> |
| 25 | JESSI; | Aha. | <i>Uh huh.</i> |
| 26 | RICARDO; | Sí. | <i>Yeah.</i> |

In Ricardo's description of the project, every agent semantic role is filled by an NGO or NGO-referring pronoun, for example, as he says that Zenade "no solo le estaba regalando" (line 6: 'wasn't just donating'), but also "le facilitaba ... trabajo" (lines 12-14: 'they gave them work') or helped people by providing jobs. Throughout the excerpt Ricardo uses no first person forms, constructing himself as peripheral to both the giving and the receiving. In fact, if he had not explicitly mentioned his embodied participation in the reforestation campaign before this excerpt, it would be unclear that he himself had physically participated. Despite this lack of linguistically-encoded agency, however, Ricardo acts agentively (discussed in greater detail below) by positioning the role of the NGO as only a donor. In Ricardo's evaluation that community members "no iba a reforestar áreas ... ajenas" (lines 22-24: 'you (generic) weren't going to reforest the lands of others'), he constructs the goal of

the NGO—to promote the practice of reforestation—as not worthwhile, performing the agentive act of sense-making that will be discussed further in the next section.

The following diagraph illustrates further examples in which community members construct themselves as peripheral to, and non-agentive within, development projects by using third-person generic direct objects and placing NGOs consistently in the subject position and the agent semantic case roles.

Diagraph 2. Grammatical resonance in participants' peripheral positioning

| NAME; | L. # | | | | | | |
|-----------|------|-------|--------------|---------|--------|------------------------|--------------|
| CAROL; | 17 | le | | pag- | -aban | a | uno |
| 9/17/2014 | | 3S.IO | | pay | 3P.IMP | to | one |
| CAROL; | 19 | se | las | d- | -aban | a | uno mismo |
| 9/17/2014 | | 3S.IO | the (plants) | give | 3P.IMP | to | oneself |
| CAROL; | 4,6 | | | pon- | -ían | a reparar los caminos | a cada quien |
| 9/17/2014 | | | | put | 3P.IMP | to repairing the roads | each person |
| CAROL; | 7 | le | {el pago} | d- | -aban | | |
| ELISA; | 8 | | | | | provisión | |
| 9/17/2014 | | 3S.IO | {the pay} | give | 3.IMP | provision | |
| RICAR.; | 6 | le | | est | -aba | regalando | |
| 9/17/2014 | | 3S.IO | | be | 3.IMP | gifting | |
| RICAR.; | 12 | le | | facilit | -aba | trabajo | |
| 9/17/2014 | | 3S.IO | | help | 3P.IMP | | |

The lack of grammatically encoded agency illustrated in the above diagraph tends to be used by participants who represent NGO contributions as purely material benefits. Crucially, although they represent themselves as peripheral and non-agentive within the context of development projects, this self-representation, as well as participants' interpretation of the NGOs' role in the community, is itself a form of agentive action. Through their positioning of NGOs as solely donors, community members resist the ideologies and practices urged by international organizations and agentively limit their participation in the process of globalization.

Sense-making as Agentive Participation

While not all locals linguistically expressed agency in their discourses of interactions with NGOs, it would be a mistake to think of them as lacking agency in the development encounter. All community members did exercise their agency, for instance, by controlling the process of sense-making through which they interpret the roles and contributions of NGOs in their town. In the recorded data, community members mostly made sense of NGO impacts on the community through one of two sociocultural constructs. They characterized NGOs' contributions as either *beneficio* (help/donation) or *orientación* (training). Because most development encounters have, as their ultimate goal, some changed behavior on the part of the community, interpretation of NGO impacts as *orientaciones* tends to pattern with a convergent ideological alignment with the goals of any given project (and agentive acceptance of that development encounter as a globalizing moment), while a construal of NGO effects as *beneficios* tends to coincide with divergent ideological alignment and agentive resistance to the globalizing nature of that development encounter.

The NGO-community relationship as orientación

In the following two examples, community members show the interpretation of the NGO-community relationship as one of *orientación*, by either explicitly evaluating an NGOs contribution as training, or by focusing on the changed behaviors that have resulted from contact with the NGO. In this example, Karla does not explicitly state that the NGO trained her. By taking a negative stance towards past community practices, however, and positively evaluating the change that the NGO brought to the community, she positions the NGO's contribution as the training they've provided to the community.

The speaker in Example 3, Karla, is a middle-aged mother, a very active member of the community, and one of my closest friends in El Prado. Her daughters participated in my women's soccer league and the environmental summer camp that I led, while Karla participated in the improved stove project, building an eco-stove that she still used at the time of the interview.



Figure 5.
Doña Karla with the author in her house

In the following excerpt, Karla positions the organization's main benefit as the training of community members to keep their community clean, and, predictable, aligns both materially and ideologically with the goals of the NGO Red Arco Iris ('the Rainbow Network'). The exchange arose in response to my question about the history of Red Arco Iris in El Prado.

Example 3

- | | | | |
|----|--------|---|---|
| 1 | KARLA: | Ah, | <i>Ah,</i> |
| 2 | | O sea que, | <i>you mean like,</i> |
| 3 | | como fue el programa cuando entro, | <i>what was the program like when it</i> |
| 4 | JESSI: | Sí. | <i>started,</i> |
| 5 | KARLA: | Ah: pues, | <i>Yeah.</i> |
| 6 | | fue muy bueno lo que— | <i>Ah well,</i> |
| 7 | | ¡ay imagínese que, | <i>it was really good what,</i> |
| 8 | | lo primero que nos vino a, | <i>I mean imagine that,</i> |
| 9 | | a eliminar la cochinada que teníamos, | <i>the first thing they came to us to do,</i> |
| 10 | | por que estábamos un poquito arreganes, | <i>was eliminate the trashiness we had,</i> |
| 11 | | y ahora mantenemos mas limpia la | <i>because we were a little lazy,</i> |
| 12 | JESSI: | comunidad. | <i>and now we keep the community</i> |
| 13 | KARLA: | Mhm. | <i>cleaner.</i> |
| 14 | | Verdad, | <i>Mhm.</i> |
| 15 | | esa es uno— | <i>Right,</i> |
| | | es un avance. | <i>that's a—</i> |

it's progress.

In this example Karla encodes linguistic agency for present-day community members, while casting their past selves as lacking that agency. She uses first person pronouns, for instance, when describing present-day community activities: “ahora mantenemos mas limpia la comunidad” (line 11: ‘now we keep the community cleaner’), but places community members in a beneficiary role when talking about the past, such as “nos vino a eliminar la cochinada” (lines 8-9: ‘the came to eliminate our trashiness’). She also ideologically aligns with the goals of the NGO, such as keeping the community streets free of trash in lines 6 and 15, evaluating the previous state of the community as a “cochinada” (‘pigsty’) and characterizing the change as “un avance” (‘progress’). She furthermore adopts the ideology that trash in the streets is bad, incorporating this ideology into local sociocultural constructs by referring to trash in the streets as a pigsty and saying that before the NGO intervention, the community members were “un poquito areganes” (‘a little lazy’). While Karla does not explicitly evaluate the contribution of Arco Iris as an *orientación*, she conveys the interpretation implicitly, by contrasting the behavior of the community members before and after the intervention of the NGO, showing that they had adopted the behaviors promoted by the NGO. She furthermore doesn’t mention any material benefits given by the NGO (although other community members mentioned the scholarships, loans, and medical care provided by Arco Iris), avoiding the interpretation that their contribution is a *beneficio*.

In the Example 4, the participants also position the role of the NGO as that of a trainer of local community members; in addition, they explicitly generalize this role to all international NGOs.



Figure 6.

Doña María and Doña Rosa participating in a community clean-up

The interview took place during an NGO-organized activity in which community members swept the streets with brooms, burning small piles of leaves, sticks, and trash. María and Rosa, two of the most involved citizens of El Prado, were participants in the clean-up (Figure 6). Rosa was the president of the committee for Red Arco Iris as well as the head community educator for El Porvenir, and both women were leaders and participants in every development project that took place in El Prado. The following exchange illustrates María's interpretation of NGO benefits as *orientaciones* that improve the life and health of community members, as well as her implicitly negative evaluation of traditional practices and her positioning of recent changes as an improvement.

Example 4

- | | | | |
|----|--------|---|--|
| 1 | MARIA; | Sí. | <i>Yeah.</i> |
| 2 | | Sí en la escuela está se esta haciendo eso, | <i>Yeah in the school um they're doing that,</i> |
| 3 | ROSA; | platicando pues el lavado del mano con los niños, | <i>Talking about hand-washing with the kids,</i> |
| 4 | MARIA; | Digo yo que xx todos los organismos que han venido, | <i>I say that xx all the org.s that have come,</i> |
| 5 | | verdad, | <i>right,</i> |
| 6 | | de otros países, | <i>from other countries,</i> |
| 7 | | nos han orientado bastante a nosotros, | <i>have taught us a lot,</i> |
| 8 | | y nosotros también les damos orientaciones a otros. | <i>and we also teach others,</i> |
| 9 | | Por lo menos, | <i>At least,</i> |
| 10 | | a los que viven en la casa, | <i>those that live in our house,</i> |
| 11 | | y ya. | <i>and that's it.</i> |
| 12 | | Mire, | <i>Look,</i> |
| 13 | | hay que hacer este, | <i>you have to do this,</i> |
| 14 | | hay que hacer xx, | <i>you have to do xx,</i> |
| 15 | | hay que hacer el lavado de mano. | <i>you have to wash your hands.</i> |

María evaluates the contribution of NGOs to the community as providing greater knowledge and changes in practices, explicitly attributing the rise in hand-washing to the influence of international organizations in lines 3-7. This understanding of NGO involvement demonstrates an agentive participation in the globalizing process that is each development encounter, as Maria evaluates positively not only material benefits provided by NGOs, but also international ideas and practices. She shows an agentive adoption of such practices by shifting from the perfective aspect in lines 4 (“todos los organismos que han venido”, ‘all the organizations that have come’) and 7 (“nos han orientado bastante a nosotros”, ‘they’ve trained us quite a bit’), to the present tense in line 8 (“y nosotros también le damos orientaciones a otros”, ‘and we also train others’). The use of person suffixes and personal pronouns in lines 4, 7, and 8, furthermore, takes a series of stances aligning Maria with NGO goals and suggesting her direct personal involvement in their activities. Her characterization, “nos han orientado a nosotros, y nosotros tambien le damos orientaciones a otros” (‘They’ve trained us and we also train others’) in lines 7 and 8 implies a sense of directionality, or a flow of norms and customs coming from ‘other countries’ and being transferred to ‘those that live in the home’. Finally, by using constructions such as “hay que” (‘it’s necessary’) in lines 18-20, she implies urgency and obligation, aligning herself with the ideology of hygiene presented by international organizations. Maria’s statements in this excerpt illustrate that, though community practices and ideologies (such as those surrounding hand-washing) are changing under the influence of foreign influences and “global flows”, this is not a passive process. Maria is agentively participating in the change through her sense-making narrative, interpreting NGO influences as *orientaciones*, and therefore, implicitly, improvements.

The NGO-Community Relationship as Beneficio

Other community members, however, interpret NGO impacts as solely *beneficios*, thus resisting foreign practices and ideologies. The next two examples illustrate participants' use of this sociocultural construct (*beneficio*) to make sense of the NGOs' contributions to the community. The quoted conversation in Examples 5a-5c arose spontaneously one morning when I went to assist Doñas Carol and Elisa as they were making *tajadas*. *Tajadas* are a work-intensive traditional Nicaraguan food that consists of plantains cut into long strips and fried to a crispy chip-like state. These *tajadas* are then placed in plastic bags, topped with sliced cabbage and tomatoes, spicy vinegar, and occasionally cheese or chicken, and sold on public transportation or at bus stops. In this case Carol's family owns land bordering the Pan-American highway, just behind the bus stop, so they run a small kiosk where they sell *tajadas*, sliced mangos, and commercial snacks and drinks to travelers. Elisa is an employee of the family who comes each morning to help prepare the *tajadas*. This morning Elisa had invited me to participate in the preparation (hopefully learning something about the process), and we chatted as we cooked.



Figure 7.

Carol, her sister Crista, Elisa and her daughter Gloria making *tajadas*

In the following example Carol interprets the impact of the international organization Zenade, a reforestation-oriented NGO, as an “ayuda” (‘help’), drawing on the sociocultural construct of *beneficio* (donation) to make sense of the community’s relationship with the NGO.

Example 5a

| | | | |
|----|--------|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1 | CAROL; | Aquí han venido varios proyectos, | <i>Quite a few projects have come here,</i> |
| 2 | | que ayudan a las personas, | <i>That help people,</i> |
| 3 | | antes por lo menos, | <i>before at least</i> |
| 4 | | ponían a reparar los caminos? | <i>they put to repairing the roads?</i> |
| 5 | JESSI; | Ah:. | <i>Ah:.</i> |
| 6 | CAROL; | cada quien, | <i>Each person,</i> |
| 7 | | y el pago le daban .. | <i>and for the pay they gave..</i> |
| 8 | ELISA; | Provisión. | <i>Provisions.</i> |
| 9 | | [...] | <i>[...]</i> |
| 10 | | También tenemos experiencia | <i>We also have experience,</i> |
| 11 | | con ese programa, | <i>with this program,</i> |
| 12 | | que llamaba Zenade. | <i>that was called ‘Zenade’</i> |
| 13 | JESSI; | Soñade? | <i>Soñade?</i> |
| 14 | CAROL; | Zenade. | <i>Zenade.</i> |
| 15 | | Tenía una oficina aquí. | <i>They had an office here.</i> |
| 16 | JESSI; | Aha? | <i>Uh huh?</i> |
| 17 | CAROL; | No recuerdo muy bien, | <i>I don’t remember well,</i> |
| 18 | | si estuvieron dos años, | <i>if they were here two years,</i> |
| 19 | | o más. | <i>or more.</i> |
| 20 | JESSI; | Aha? | <i>Uh huh?</i> |
| 21 | CAROL; | Traían la tarea de:, | <i>They brought the work,</i> |
| 22 | | que uno sembraba, | <i>of planting,</i> |
| 23 | | llenaba las bolsas de tierra, | <i>filling bags with dirt,</i> |
| 24 | JESSI; | Aha? | <i>Uh huh.</i> |
| 25 | CAROL; | por lo menos, | <i>At least,</i> |
| 26 | | por un cien, | <i>For one hundred,</i> |
| 27 | | le pagaba a cada persona, | <i>they paid each person,</i> |
| 28 | | ### un cien de bolsas. | <i>### one hundred bags.</i> |
| 29 | JESSI; | Interesante. | <i>Interesting.</i> |
| 30 | CAROL; | Ya era una ayuda, | <i>It was a help,</i> |
| 31 | | por lo menos, | <i>at least,</i> |
| 32 | | para las personas. | <i>for the people.</i> |

Throughout the conversation, Carol positively evaluates the impacts of the NGO *Zenade* on the community, interpreting them as “ayuda” (lines 2 and 30: ‘help’). At the same time, she focuses exclusively on the material effects of the contact with *Zenade*, choosing to exclude any mention of reforestation as a practice that the community can or should adopt. Instead she states only the work that the NGO paid participants to complete (lines 4, 22, and

23), and the material benefits they received for participating (lines 8 and 27). Carol's use of frequent mitigations like "por lo menos" (lines 3 and 31: 'at least'), shows only a qualified acceptance of the contributions of the NGO, implying that the pay (at least) was helpful, while the education was not.

In Example 5b, which took place less than a minute after 5a, Carol goes on to explicitly evaluate the good aspects of the program as the donation of trees and monetary pay for community members who participated, rather than any sort of education about reforestation. She thus implicitly positions the Zenade as a donor rather than in a training role.

Example 5b

| | | | |
|----|--------|---|--|
| 1 | CAROL; | Usted iba en la cosa, | <i>Did you go to the thing,</i> |
| 2 | | Elisa, | <i>Elisa,</i> |
| 3 | | cuando estuvo ese [proyecto]? | <i>When that project was here?</i> |
| 4 | | [Sí.] | <i>Yes.</i> |
| 5 | | ((loud noise)) | |
| 6 | | Con la Nubia, | <i>With Nubia,</i> |
| 7 | | las dos. | <i>the two of us.</i> |
| 8 | | Así era. | <i>That's right.</i> |
| 9 | | Mi mamá, | <i>My mom,</i> |
| 10 | | mi- la Emilia, | <i>my- Emilia,</i> |
| 11 | | y la otra hermana. | <i>and the other sister.</i> |
| 12 | | Con la Mirna [me parece]. | <i>With Mirna it seems to me,</i> |
| 13 | | [con la Mirna]. | <i>With Mirna.</i> |
| 14 | JESSI; | Ah sí. | <i>Ah yeah.</i> |
| 15 | CAROL; | Fue bonito sí, | <i>It was nice,</i> |
| 16 | | le digo yo, | <i>I say,</i> |
| 17 | | porque le pagaban a uno, | <i>because they paid you,</i> |
| 18 | ELISA; | y aparte después las plantas, | <i>and then</i> |
| 19 | CAROL; | cuando estuvieron se las daban a uno mismo, | <i>when the plants were ready they gave them to you,</i> |
| 20 | ELISA; | y pagaron para que fuera a sembrarlas. | <i>and paid you to plant them.</i> |
| 21 | | Ah. | <i>Ah.</i> |
| 22 | | Sí nosotros— | <i>Yes we—</i> |
| 23 | | mire por eso están tantos árboles de caoba, | <i>look because of that there are so many caoba trees.</i> |
| 24 | | Nosotros tenemos, | <i>We have,</i> |
| 25 | | [este:], | <i>um,</i> |
| 26 | CAROL; | [pochote] | <i>pochote,</i> |
| 27 | ELISA; | cao:ba, | <i>caoba,</i> |
| 28 | | ce:dro, | <i>cedro,</i> |
| 29 | | hay nim, | <i>there's nim,</i> |
| 30 | CAROL; | no de este-- | <i>no it's that--</i> |
| 31 | | sí nim es, | <i>yes it is nim,</i> |
| 32 | | [verdad]? | <i>right?</i> |
| 33 | ELISA; | [Sí]. | <i>Yes.</i> |

| | | |
|----|-------------------------------|---|
| 34 | Nim, | <i>Nim,</i> |
| 35 | este; | <i>um</i> |
| 36 | otros palos de jícara, | <i>more jicaro trees,</i> |
| 37 | Ah sembraron jícara bastante. | <i>Ah they planted a lot of jicaro.</i> |

In lines 15, 17, and 19, Carol continues to interpret the benefits of Zenade's project as the material goods they gave to the community, both the trees and the pay for community members who participated, saying the it was "bonito" ('good') because "le pagaban a uno" ('they paid you') and that "aparte despues las plantas, cuando estuvieron so las daban a uno mismo" ('apart from that, when the plants were ready they gave them to you').

As the goal of development projects such as Zenade's is usually to change community practices on some level, the interpretation of an NGO's contribution as a *beneficio* is a type of ideological divergent alignment. In this excerpt Carol illustrates her divergent ideological stance towards the goals of the NGO quite clearly. While Carol took an embodied stance aligning with the NGO project by participating at the time, she now demonstrates her divergent ideological alignment by representing herself as a peripheral participant, at best, in the narrative. She first shows her embodied alignment by explicitly mentioning that she participated in the reforestation project, stating "mi mama, mi- la Emilia, y la otra hermana" (lines 9-11: 'my mother, my- Emilia, and the other sister'), to which Elisa supplies "con la Mirna me parece" (line 12: 'with Mirna, it seems to me'), contributing the name of another person who used to participate in the reforestation project. Carol also shows her embodied participation by explaining that her participation in the project is the reason that there are many *Caoba* trees planted in their patio, saying that "por eso están tantos árboles de caoba" (line 23: 'because of that we have so many *caoba* trees').

On an ideological level, however, Carol positions herself as divergently aligned with the goals of the project. Throughout the rest of the conversation, for instance, Carol does not

actively represent herself as a participant. She says for instance, in discussing the types of trees planted through the course of the project, that “sembraron jícara bastante” (line 37: ‘they planted a lot of *jícara*’). Carol’s use of a third person pronoun to describe work that she herself participated in positions her as peripheral to the project shows a divergently aligned ideological stance toward the goals of the project. Furthermore, in lines 17-19 she says the project was nice because “le pagaban a uno, y aparte despues las plantas, cuando estuvieron se las daban a uno mismo” (‘They paid one, and apart from that when the plants were ready they gave them to you’). The use of these impersonal and generic constructions can be contrasted with Karla’s use of first person pronouns to represent her participation in the first example. Through the use of such generic pronouns Carol distances herself from the goals and effects of the project, limiting her represented role to that of an observer, and illustrated the gap between her ideological and embodied stances toward this development encounter.

Carol also ideologically positions herself in divergent alignment with the long-term goals of the project by using the past tense throughout the majority of the conversation. The only instances in which she utilizes the present tense are when she gives an evaluation of the project or her own telling of the narrative, as in lines 16 and 24. While one would expect a narrative about past events to take place mostly in the past tense, in this case Carol’s use of primarily past tense contrasts with Karla’s inclusion of present tense in Example 1, and functions as a mechanism to ideologically position Carol as not supporting the goals of the project (reforestation), which would extend in present day, as there are in fact still trees planted in the course of the project under discussion in Carol’s yard.

Carol furthermore shows a lack of ideological alignment with the goal of reforestation by evaluating the project solely in terms of its material benefit to the people who participated—

“fue bonito, le digo yo, porque le pagaban a uno” (lines 15-17: ‘it was nice, I say, because they paid you (generic)’). She never mentions or evaluates in any way the goal of reforestation. This lack of ideological alignment is also seen in her lack of embodied participation in the long term, as seen in the following example.

In the culmination of her narrative, Carol mentions that many of the fruit trees planted through the course of the reforestation project have died because participants did not continue taking care of them. She relates that they were planted during the dry season, and therefore the participants had to water them, going on to say that, because community members had to carry the water from the wells, “ajustaba para el consumo de uno, y para los no había” (lines 22-23: ‘there was enough for one’s own use, and then for the trees there wasn’t any left’).

Example 5c

| | | | |
|----|--------|---|--|
| 1 | ELISA; | Melocotón, | <i>Starfruit,</i> |
| 2 | | todas estas cosas, | <i>all those types,</i> |
| 3 | | hasta uno de nancite, | <i>even one of nancite,</i> |
| 4 | CAROL; | Uh huh. | <i>Uh huh.</i> |
| 5 | ELISA; | se me secaron toditos. | <i>They all died.</i> |
| 6 | JESSI; | Ah:. | <i>Ahh.</i> |
| 7 | ELISA; | No pegaron todos. | <i>Not a one stuck.</i> |
| 8 | JESSI; | Ah:. | <i>Ahh.</i> |
| 9 | CAROL; | Es que lo que pasa es que tal vez al- algún animal, | <i>It’s that what happened is that maybe an- an animal,</i> |
| 10 | | o tal vez que un mal sembrado | <i>or maybe one was badly planted,</i> |
| 11 | | o tal vez [se XXXXX] | <i>or maybe [it XXXXXXXXXX],</i> |
| 12 | ELISA; | [XXXXXXX] | <i>[XXXXXXXXXXXXX]</i> |
| 13 | CAROL; | entonces no todos los árboles, | <i>so not all the trees,</i> |
| 14 | | y como era en época de invierno que uno los sembraba, | <i>and as it was winter time that one planted them,</i> |
| 15 | ELISA; | Mhm. | <i>Mhm.</i> |
| 16 | CAROL; | #No #había #que regar por la escasez del agua. | <i>There wasn’t enough to irrigate because of the scarcity of water.</i> |
| 17 | | Así que había que jalarla del pozo. | <i>So you (generic) had to bring it from the well.</i> |
| 18 | JESSI; | Pues sí. | <i>Well yes.</i> |
| 19 | ELISA; | [@@@] | <i>@@@</i> |
| 20 | JESSI; | [@XXXX @XXXXX @@] | <i>@XXXX @XXXXX @@</i> |
| 21 | CAROL; | [@@@] | <i>@@@</i> |
| 22 | | Ajustaba para el consumo de uno, | <i>There was enough for one’s own use,</i> |
| 23 | | y ya para los palos no había. | <i>and then for the trees there wasn’t any left.</i> |
| 24 | | Daba pesar: pero. | <i>It was sad but.</i> |

These excerpts may appear to illustrate a lack of agency on the part of Carol, as she constructs herself as a peripheral participant, and very rarely places herself or other community members in an agentive role. Her act of rejecting the central role the NGO would like her to play, however, as well as her act of negotiating the NGO's role in the community and the contribution it makes, are agentive acts, a method of resistance to the ideologies and practices imported by the NGO (as seen by the death of the trees), and one way in which Carol orients herself in globalizing encounters.

Grammatical Constructions of Sociocultural Constructs

The two primary sociocultural constructs through which community members interpret their relationships with NGOs, *orientación* and *beneficio*, also resonate throughout their discourse in other ways. For instance, the similar grammatical constructions used by different community members to position and make sense of development encounters provide linguistic resources through which community members evaluate NGOs and participate in the distributed agency of the community (Bucholtz and Hall 2005). By adapting Du Bois' framework of dialogic syntax, it is possible to track these resonances and their use by community members as they evaluate projects through the lens of certain sociocultural constructs. The following diagram shows the consistently positive way in which community members evaluate NGOs, something which may be a symptom of the material constraints faced by the participants. At the same time, however, it illustrates the differing sociocultural constructs in which community members position NGOs.

Diagraph 3. Positive NGO evaluation

| Name | L # | | | |
|---------------------|--------|-----------------|----------------|--|
| KARLA; 9/14/2014 | 6, 9 | fue (it) was | bonito nice | lo que- ... nos vino a eliminar la cochinada que teníamos what they-... they came to get rid of the trashiness we had |
| MARIO; 9/20/2014 | 1, 3 | es (it) is | bonito nice | ... los proyectos que vienen the projects that come |
| CAROL; 9/17/2014 | 15, 17 | fue (it) was | bonito nice | porque le pagaban a uno because they paid you |

All community members, for instance, use the ‘to be’ + ADJ construction to evaluate the development projects. While this is a very common structure in Nicaraguan Spanish, it is notable that all community members use the same evaluative structure among several common evaluative grammatical constructions, and furthermore, that participants interviewed uniformly evaluated the development projects as *bonito*, or ‘good’. Within the resonating evaluative structures, however, community members differ in their explanations for the goodness of the projects. Explanations for positive evaluations as either because *le pagaban a uno*, ‘they paid you (generic)’, or *nos vino a eliminar la cochinada que teníamos*, ‘they came to get rid of the pigsty we had’, position NGOs as either donors or trainers, and foreign ideologies as either unnecessary or an improvement, providing another way for participants to exercise their agency within ideological and material constraints.

Similarly, in the following diagraph, participants resonate through their use of the evaluative grammatical construction *ser un(a) _____* (‘to be a _____’) to position the projects completed by NGOs either as improved practices for the community or as material benefits.

Diagraph 4. NGO-positioning through evaluative structures

| Name | L # | | | | |
|----------------------|-----|-----------------|----------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| KARLA; 9/14/2014 | 15 | es (it) is | un an | avance improvement | |
| GLADIS; 9/16/2014 | 47 | es (it) is | un an | avance improvement | |
| CAROL; 9/17/2014 | 30 | era (it) was | una a | ayuda help | por lo menos at least |

Ser un(a) ____ is also a very common grammatical construction in Spanish; however, it is primarily used in these interviews as a way to position the results of NGO projects as either an improvement or a form of material aid. This suggests the prominence of the two sociocultural constructs *orientación* and *beneficio* for the community members. Furthermore, even in the cases where I did explicitly ask about community members' experiences with development organizations, I asked the general question "tell me a little about the community's history working with organizations". Even though I did not ask the participants to evaluate the projects, they consistently included such evaluations and stances as part of the narration of their experiences with development organizations.

Likewise, in Diagram 5, community members explicitly evaluate the NGOs effects on their own lives.

Diagram 5. Evaluation of NGO impacts

| Name | L # | | | |
|----------------------|-----|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| GLADIS; 9/16/2014 | 39 | <i>nos</i> 1PL.DO | <i>ha</i> 3SG.PRF | <i>ayudado</i> <i>help.PST</i> |
| GLADIS; 9/16/2014 | 40 | <i>nos</i> 1PL.DO | <i>ha</i> 3SG.PRF | <i>beneficiado</i> <i>aid.PST</i> |
| MARIA; 9/12/2014 | 7 | <i>nos</i> 1PL.DO | <i>han</i> 3PL.PRF | <i>orientado</i> <i>train.PST</i> |

Gladis mobilizes resonances within her own discourse to draw a parallel between the actions of the NGO and their effects of having *ayudado* ('helped') and *beneficiado* ('benefited') the community. Maria also resonates with the structure *nos* + *haber* + *verb*, to evaluate the effects of the organization for her community. In contrast, though, she evaluates the effects as having *orientado* ('trained') the community. Through these resonances, we can see the agentive social action through which participants negotiate their role and relationship with development organizations. They represent the organizations' contributions through one of two sociocultural constructs. Some community members represent NGO's effects as an

orientación, a training or education that improves the norms and practices of the Pradeños, implicitly evaluating previous community practices as inferior and promoting the adoption of international ideologies. Others, however, resist international ideologies and practices by positioning NGOs as solely providing material benefit. This interpretation constructs the NGO-promoted practices and ideologies as unnecessary and ineffective, limiting the contact with globalizing ideologies and maintaining El Prado's autonomy from the "global village". By analyzing the resonating grammatical structures mobilized by community members in their discourses of development interactions, researchers can better illustrate the recurring sociocultural constructs and linguistic resources, such as stance taking, through which community members exercise agency.

Complexifying the constructs: "Sin la gente no hay nada"

While most of the community members represented the NGOs as either donors or trainers, their own participation as either peripheral and non-agentive or central and agentive, and themselves as either ideologically disaligned or aligned, respectively, the following participant complexifies the dichotomy. In Example 6 Gladis interprets the impact of NGOs as one of *beneficio*. However, in contrast to Carol and Elisa in Example 5, who also interpret NGOs as donors, she appears to ideologically align with the goals of the development projects and represents herself, as well as other community members, as central participants in development projects.

Example 6

| | | | |
|----|---------|--|--|
| 27 | GLADIS; | Siempre han- han— | <i>They've- they've always—</i> |
| 28 | | .. | <i>..</i> |
| 29 | | han vendido este estas organizaciones. | <i>these organizations have always come.</i> |
| 30 | JESSI; | Mm, | <i>Mm,</i> |
| 31 | | mhm? | <i>mhm?</i> |
| 32 | GLADIS; | Y siempre: nos ha gustado, | <i>And we've always liked it,</i> |
| 33 | | porque apoyan a la gente. | <i>because they help people.</i> |
| 34 | JESSI; | Mm, | <i>Mm,</i> |
| 35 | | mhm. | <i>mhm.</i> |

| | | | |
|----|---------|---|--|
| 36 | GLADIS; | Porque trabajamos todos unidos, | <i>Because we work together,</i> |
| 37 | | participamos en las reuniones. | <i>we participate in the meetings.</i> |
| 38 | JESSI; | Aha. | <i>Uh huh.</i> |
| 39 | GLADIS; | Nos ha ayudado— | <i>They've helped us—</i> |
| 40 | | Nos ha beneficiado, | <i>They've benefited us,</i> |
| 41 | | Porque la comunidad se ha desarrollado, | <i>because the community has developed,</i> |
| 42 | | este, | <i>um,</i> |
| 43 | | tenemos escuela, | <i>we have a school,</i> |
| 44 | | más bonita. | <i>that's prettier.</i> |
| 45 | | Ahora hay secundaria. | <i>Now there's a high school.</i> |
| 46 | JESSI; | Mhm. | <i>Mhm.</i> |
| 47 | GLADIS; | Ese es un .. un avance. | <i>That's a .. progress.</i> |
| 48 | JESSI; | Sí. | <i>Yeah.</i> |
| 49 | GLADIS; | Porque sin ayuda de la gente? | <i>Because without help from the people?</i> |
| 50 | JESSI; | Sí. | <i>Yeah.</i> |
| 51 | GLADIS; | No hay nada. | <i>There's nothing.</i> |
| 52 | | Así se van las organizaciones. | <i>That way the NGOs leave.</i> |
| 53 | JESSI; | Sí. | <i>Yeah.</i> |
| 54 | GLADIS; | Entonces tenemos que trabajar apoyar? | <i>So we have to work to help?</i> |
| 55 | | para que .. vengan, | <i>so that ... they come,</i> |
| 56 | | más ayuda, | <i>more help,</i> |
| 57 | | a ésta comunidad. | <i>to this community.</i> |

In lines 39, 40, and 56 Gladis explicitly evaluates NGOs' contributions to the community as an “ayuda” (lines 39 and 56: ‘help’) and “beneficio” (line 40: ‘benefit’). In contrast to other participants, however, Gladis does construct herself as a central participant in the projects. She also evaluates NGO influences as “un avance” (line 47: ‘progress’), however, suggesting a positive evaluation of global practices and ideologies, and illustrating that sense-making is a complex process that allows community members to participate in globalizing encounters in nuanced ways.

The final example demonstrates that community members are aware of the differing interpretations and regard them as agentive social actions. In Example 7 Mario makes explicit the difference between material alignment and ideological alignment by criticizing those community members who participate in development encounters only on a material level.



Figure 8.
Mario and his wife Elisa with the author in their home

Mario is an active participant in many NGO projects, and a trained carpenter who is often hired by NGOs to provide skilled labor. During the improved stove project that carried out by the Peace Corps, Mario was hired to do the riveting for the chimneys. The quoted exchange took place at the end of the interview, after I asked him if there was anything else he'd like to say.

Example 7

| | | | |
|----|--------|---------------------------------|---|
| 1 | MARIO; | Es bonito, | <i>It's nice,</i> |
| 2 | | pues, | <i>you know,</i> |
| 3 | | los proyectos que vienen a las— | <i>the projects that come to the—</i> |
| 4 | | a las comunidades, | <i>to the communities,</i> |
| 5 | | pero:, | <i>but,</i> |
| 6 | | que:, | <i>like,</i> |
| 7 | | como gente que lo ha— | <i>like people that,</i> |
| 8 | | que haiga que le sepan | <i>there should be people that know how to take</i> |
| 9 | | aprovechar, | <i>advantage</i> |
| 10 | | los- los- los proyectos. | <i>of the the the projects.</i> |
| 11 | | No que, | <i>Not that</i> |
| 12 | | .. | <i>..</i> |
| 13 | | sólo porque me lo den, | <i>just because they give it to me,</i> |
| 14 | | y no, | <i>and not,</i> |
| 15 | | ya está, | <i>that's it,</i> |
| 16 | JESSI; | no? | <i>right?</i> |
| 17 | MARIO; | Sí. | <i>Yeah.</i> |
| 18 | | A mí, | <i>For me,</i> |
| 19 | | en mi particular, | <i>in particular,</i> |
| 20 | | me gusta seguir, | <i>I like to keep,</i> |
| 21 | | .. | <i>..</i> |
| 22 | JESSI; | dando seguimiento a [eso]. | <i>following up with them.</i> |
| 23 | MARIO; | [Sí]. | <i>Yeah.</i> |
| 24 | JESSI; | Me gusta. | <i>I like it.</i> |
| 25 | MARIO; | @@ | <i>@@</i> |
| | | Sí. | <i>Yeah.</i> |

In this excerpt Mario clearly illustrates the distinction between the two ways of making sense of development encounters. He is very explicit about both his ideological, represented, and embodied alignment with the goals of development projects, and explicitly positions himself as approaching NGO contact through an *orientación* mindset, at the same time negatively evaluating those whose involvement only consists of accepting material offerings. He says that projects need people who “que le sepan aprovechar, los- los- los proyectos. No que, solo porque me lo den, y no, ya está” (lines 8-14: ‘know how to take advantage of the projects. Not that, just because they give it to me, and that’s it’). He takes an embodied stance aligning himself with development projects by actively participating. Furthermore, he represents himself as an agentive participant both during the project and afterward, saying “A mí, en mi particular, me gusta seguir, dando seguimiento a eso” (lines 17-21: ‘For me, specifically, I like following up with this stuff’). Through negatively aligning with community members that are content to limit their interaction with NGOs to the reception of material goods, Mario illustrates participants’ meta-interpretive awareness of the sense-making process, and points out that interpretation is an agentive act.

Conclusion

This thesis has sought to develop a fuller understanding of rural community members’ agency in their relationship with international organizations. Through a close analysis of discourses of participation in development projects, I endeavored to comprehend how Nicaraguans agentively interpret their role in the development encounter, and, on a broader scale, what this suggests about their orientation towards each development encounter as globalizing interaction. As I have shown, participants make sense of this globalizing contact by interpreting their relation to development agencies through local sociocultural

constructs. In discourses about development encounters, community members tend to represent their relationship with NGOs through one of the two socially constructed concepts: *orientación* or *beneficio*. Some participants conceptualize of NGOs as training locals in new practices and ideologies that improve their lives in some way. Community members who interpret the town-NGO relationship through this frame tend to position themselves as central agents in development and align with global ideologies and practices promoted by the interaction. Other participants, in contrast, position NGOs as providing material benefits to the town, but do not see the organization as having changed the practices or ideologies of the villagers. This perception of the NGO-community relationship as one of donor/beneficiary often patterns with represented peripheral role and a negative evaluation of the global practices and ideologies espoused by the NGO. This investigation not only illuminates the process by which communities make sense of development encounters, but also gives some insight into how participants exercise agency in their interactions with international organizations and, on a broader scale, global flows of ideologies and practices. Crucially, the process of making sense of contact with NGOs is done through stance-taking actions, highlighting sense-making as an agentic social action, and discourses as a key site for such agentic interpretation. In the context of development encounters, unequal access to power and resources constrains the outlets through which locals mobilize their agency, and many scholars who have emphasized the asymmetrical nature of the relationship have overlooked the agency exercised by community members. A fine-grained narrative analysis, however, illuminates interpretation, or sense-making, as an agentic action performed by community members. Recognizing this ideological means of expressing agency allows for a more nuanced view of community-NGO relations, as well as agency in general.

Close attention to local interpretations of development encounters could also be beneficial to the study of globalization more generally. In a field that has historically focused on the macro-level processes and effects of greater global connectivity, attention to grounded interactions, like those between the Pradeños and international NGOs, can shed light on micro-level globalizing contact that “scales up” to create macro level cultural flows. Pradeños’ positioning of NGOs’ relationship to the community as one of either *orientación* or *beneficio*, for instance, suggests an orientation to global ideologies more broadly. Some community members agentively adopt new international ideologies and practices by positioning NGOs as possessors of beneficial knowledge and implicitly evaluating previous community practices as inferior. They thus represent the organizations’ contributions as improving the norms and practices of the inhabitants and promote the adoption of globalizing ideologies and practices. Others, however, resist international ideologies and practices by positioning NGOs as solely providing material benefit, evaluating the community’s traditional norms and practices positively. They therefore restrict development encounters to a transfer of only material aid, resisting the adoption of international ideologies and practices. Analyzing discourses of development encounters can thus shed light on the grounded nature of globalization while also highlighting community members’ agency in the process. Pradeños’ discourses of NGOs illustrate that while the structural forces that create globalizing interactions constrain the actions that community members can take and the frames within which they can represent development encounters, community members still agentively participate in or resist each development encounter as a globalizing moment by negotiating their own roles in the interaction, as well as the role of each NGO in the community.

I have also aimed to show that an analysis of participant discourse can be useful to development workers and to development studies, as such discourse sheds light on the community's perception of their own role in the projects facilitated by NGOs. In a field where the success or failure of projects often depends on the ideological buy-in of community members, an understanding of participants' agency in interpreting community-NGO relationships could be extremely beneficial. Ultimately, such an analysis reveals that although community members may not exercise their agency in the way that NGOs hope—to take charge of and sustain development projects introduced by outsiders—locals are not passive participants in either development encounters or in globalization processes more broadly.

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